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Honourable delegates,

It is with pleasure that I address the Portuguese National Congress on Literacy, Media and Citizenship, although regrettably prior commitments prevent me from being present with you today.

The subject of the Congress is at the heart of UNESCO's mandate as the only UN agency with an internationally recognized role in the field of mass communication and media. In this regard, UNESCO seeks not only to promote free, independent and pluralistic media, but also to facilitate democratic citizenship. While seeking to develop media as *institutions*, we also work to engage citizens as *co-actors* in democracy.

Therefore, our approach to media development is two-fold: creating conditions in which media institutions can *supply* the information essential for democratic societies to function and equipping citizens with the necessary skills to enable them place *demands* on their social institutions, including news media, so that they can effectively perform their democratic functions.

To take the first point, media development as the *supply* side of our efforts, I can cite one key example to illustrate our work. Through a participatory process, UNESCO developed the Media Development Indicators (MDIs), which were endorsed in February 2010 by the 27th Intergovernmental Bureau of UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

The MDIs can be used to assess societies in terms of their system of media regulation for free, independent and pluralistic media; extent of media plurality and diversity, level economic playing field and transparency of media ownership; democratic discourse in media content; professional capacity building and supporting institutions that underpin freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity; and infrastructural capacity to support independent and pluralistic media. In Croatia, for example, the Centre for Media and Communication of the University of Zagreb piloted the MDIs and found them to be suitable for possible replication on a regional scale.

In terms of the second point, UNESCO's *demand* side of media development, we are working to encourage a critical interrogation of media and information providers through a process of media and information literacy among citizens. UNESCO's literacy campaign straddles both media and information in order to underscore the fact that technological *convergence* is allowing for the kind of

conceptual, operational, pedagogical and policy synergies in which media and other information providers are increasingly becoming embedded. Our key strategy is the development of resources on media and information literacy for teachers in schools, including developing media and information literacy indicators as benchmarks.

It is important to citizens to critically evaluate their information providers in terms of their messages, the context in which they produce those messages, and the democratic obligations to which they must be held accountable. This is particularly applicable to news media. Through its media and information literacy activities, UNESCO will contribute to cultivating vibrant knowledge societies in which news media become a subject of life-long knowledge and learning, as well as of democratic discourse.

The importance of media and information literacy has further been underscored by UNESCO's Member States through their reflection on the role of the internet in society. The need for citizens who can discern the virtues and vices associated with the internet cannot be overemphasized.

It is our collective responsibility to leverage the potential of the internet and media and information literacy is one of the tools at our disposal.

I would like to conclude by affirming UNESCO's support for the efforts of the Portuguese National Commission for UNESCO, including those of the numerous co-organisers of this Congress. We believe that the sum total of our efforts can bring about a truly responsive and accountable media as well as a civically engaged citizenry.

Thank you.